

For to Us a Child is Born

A Collection of Christmas Carols

With Accompanying Chords and Histories

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Mary's Boy Child

4/4 time; crotchet = 116–158

Verse One

| C . . . | F . .
 A long time ago in Bethlehem
 F | G . . . | C . . . |
 So the Holy Bibles say
 C . C7/E . | F . D/F# .
 Mary's boy child Jesus Christ
 D | G . G7#9 . | C . . . |
 Was born on Christmas Day.

Verse Two

While shepherds watched their flocks by night
 They saw a bright new shining star
 Them see a choir of angels sing,
 The music seemed to come from afar:

Chorus

C . F . | G G7 C . |
Hark thou hear the angels sing,
 Am . D7 . | G . .
Listen to what they say:
 G | C . C7/E . | F . D/F# .
That man might live for evermore,
 | C/G . G . | C . . . |
Because of Christmas Day!

Verse Three

By and by they found a little nook
 In a stable all forlorn
 And in a manger, cold and dark,
 Mary's little boy child was born.

Chorus

*Hark thou hear the angels sing,
Listen to what they say:
That man might live for evermore,
Because of Christmas Day!*

Chorus Two

*Trumpets sound and angels sing,
Listen to what they say:
That man might live for evermore,
Because of Christmas Day!*

* * *

History

When Harry Belafonte was asked by the conductor of Schumann's Hollywood Choir to write a new Christmas song for his choir, he remembered a calypso tune he had composed some time earlier for a friend's birthday party. Putting new words to the melody, he created this Christmas song.

Angels From the Realms of Glory

4/4 time; crotchet = 100–116

Verse One

| : F | C7 . F . |

Angels from the realms of glory

F | C7 . F . |

Wing your flight o'er all the Earth

F | C7 . . . |

Ye, who sang creation's story

F | C7 . F . |

Now proclaim Messiah's birth!

Refrain

F · D · | Gm · C · | F · Bb . | C . . . | F/A . Bb . | C . . . |

Co — — — — me and worship Christ the newborn King,

F · D · | Gm · C · | F · Bb . | C . . . |

Co — — — — me and worship,

F/A . Bb . | C . . . | F : |

Worship Christ the newborn King.

Verse Two

Shepherds in the fields abiding

Watching o'er your flocks by night,

God with man is now residing:

Yonder shines the infant light.

Come and worship ...

Verse Three

Sages, leave your contemplations;

Brighter visions beam afar;

Seek the great desire of nations,

Ye have seen His natal star;

Come and worship ...

Verse Four

Saints before the alter bending
Watching long in hope and fear:
Suddenly the Lord, descending
In His temple shall appear.
Come and worship ...

Verse Five

Though an infant now we view Him,
He shall fill His Father's throne,
Gather all the nations to Him;
Every knee shall then bow down:
Come and worship ...

* * *

History

Irishman James Montgomery wrote the words to 'Angels From the Realms of Glory' in 1816. Henry Smart composed the music to this triumphant carol. An alternate refrain is '*Gloria in excelsis deo*'.

[IRIS 87.87.47 extended]

Away in a Manger

3/4 time; crotchet = 86–104

Verse One

|:C|F . .|. . . |F7 . . |Bb .
 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
 Bb |Gm . C7 |F . . |G7 . . |C7 .
 The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head,
 C7 |F . . .|. . . |F7 . . |Bb .
 The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,
 Bb |Gm . C |F Dm .|G . C7 |F . :|
 The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

Verse Two

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
 But little Lord Jesus – no crying He makes.
 I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
 And stay by my side until morning is nigh.

Verse Three

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
 Close by me forever and love me I pray.
 Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,
 And fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

* * *

Alternate Melody (Mueller)

|:F|F . .|. . . |Bb . . |F .
 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
 F |C . . .|. . . |F . . .|. .
 The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head,

F | F . . | . . . | Bb . . | F .

The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay,

F | Bb . . | Dm . . | G . C | F . :|

The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

* * *

History

'Away in a Manger' was first published in the late nineteenth century, accrediting Martin Luther as author of the first two verses. These are now thought to be American, not German, in origin. The third verse was written by John McFarland in 1904.

The first melodic setting by William Kirkpatrick is most popular in England. The second, composed by James Murray (commonly called **Mueller**), is more popular in the United States.

[CRADLE SONG/MUELLER 11 11.11 11 anapaestic]

Ding Dong! Merrily on High

2/4 time; crotchet = 98–112

Verse One

| : **B** **E** | **F#** .
 Ding Dong! Merrily on High,
 | **E** **F#** | **Bsus B** |
 In heaven the bells are ringing.
B **E** | **F#** .
 Ding Dong! Verily the sky
 | **E** **F#** | **Bsus B** |
 Is riven with angel singing:

Refrain

B · | **E** · | **B** · | **F#** · | **G#m** · | **D#m** · |
Glo — — — — — — — — *ria*,
 | **E** **F#** | **Bsus B** : |
Hosanna in excelsis!

Verse Two

E'en so here below, below,
 Let steeple bells be swungen,
 And 'Io, io, io!'
 By priest and people sungen.
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

Verse Three

Play you dutifully prime
 Your matin chime, ye ringers;
 May you beautifully rime,
 Your evetime song, ye singers:
Gloria, Hosanna in excelsis!

History

The tune to 'Ding Dong!' first appeared as a secular dance tune known under the title *Branle de l'Official in Orchésographie*, a dance book written by Jehan Tabourot. The lyrics are from English composer George Woodward, and the carol was first published in 1924 in his *The Cambridge Carol-Book: Being Fifty-two Songs for Christmas, Easter, And Other Seasons*.

Woodward had a great interest in church bell ringing, which no doubt aided him in writing it.

[DING DONG! 77.77 with refrain]

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

4/4 time; crotchet = 154–180

Verse One

|:B7|Em . D .|Em . D
 God rest ye merry gentlemen,
 D |C . Am . |B7 . .
 Let nothing you dismay:
 Em|Em. D . |Em. D
 Remember Christ, our Saviour,
 D |C . Am . |B7 . .
 Was born on Christmas Day
 B7|Am . Am/C . |D . Em
 To save us all from Satan's power
 D |C . Am . |B7 .
 When we were gone astray

Refrain

B7. |Em. . . |Cmaj7. B . |Em .
O, tidings of comfort and joy,
 Em . |A7 .
Comfort and joy,
 C6. |G. . . |B7. . . |Em. . . |... :|
O, tidings of comfort and joy!

Verse Two

In Bethlehem, in Israel,
 This blessed babe was born,
 And laid within a manger
 Upon this blessed morn,
 The which His mother Mary
 Did nothing take in scorn. *O, tidings ...*

Verse Three

From God our Heavenly Father
A blessed Angel came;
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same:
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name. *O, tidings ...*

Verse Four

'Fear not then,' said the Angel,
'Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour of
A pure virgin bright,
To free all those who trust in Him
From Satan's power and might.' *O, tidings ...*

Verse Five

The shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm and wind
And went to Bethlehem straightway
The Son of God to find. *O, tidings ...*

Verse Six

And when they came to Bethlehem
Where our dear Saviour lay,
They found Him in a manger
(Where oxen feed on hay);
His mother Mary kneeling down
Unto the Lord did pray. *O, tidings ...*

Verse Seven

Now to the Lord sing praises,
 All you within this place,
 And with true love and brotherhood
 Each other now embrace;
 This holy tide of Christmas
 All other doth deface. *O, tidings ...*

* * *

History

'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' was first published in 1833 when it appeared in *Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern*, a collection of seasonal carols gathered by William Sandys. The lyrics are from the traditional Old English, reportedly dating back to the 15th century, although the author is unknown.

It is believed that this particular carol was sung to the gentry by town watchmen to earn additional money during the Christmas season.

[GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN 86.86.86 with refrain]

Good King Wenceslas

2/4 time; crotchet = 86–98

Verse One

| :A F#m |D E |

Good King Wenceslas looked out

D E |A . |

On the Feast of Stephen

A F#m |D E |

When the snow lay round about

D E |Asus A |

Deep and crisp and even.

F#m . |C#m . |

Brightly shone the moon that night,

D E |A |

Though the frost was cruel,

F#m7 . |D E |

When a poor man came in sight,

A . |D·|A . :|

Gath'ring winter fuel.

Verse Two

'Hither, Page, and stand by me,

If thou know'st it, telling

Yonder peasant, who is he?

Where and what his dwelling?'

'Sire, he lives a good league hence,

Underneath a mountain,

Right against the forest fence

By Saint Agnes' fountain.'

Verse Three

'Bring me flesh and bring me wine,
 Bring me pine logs hither,
 Thou and I shall see him dine,
 When we bear him thither.'
 Page and Monarch forth they went,
 Forth they went together,
 Through the rude wind's wild lament
 And the bitter weather.

Verse Four

'Sire, the night is darker now,
 And the wind blows stronger.
 Fails my heart, I know not how,
 I can go no longer.'
 'Mark my footsteps, my good page,
 Tread thou in them boldly;
 Thy shalt find the winter's rage
 Freeze thy blood less coldly.'

Verse Five

In his master's steps he trod,
 Where the snow lay dinted:
 Heat was in the very sod
 Which the Saint had printed!
 Therefore, Christian Men, be sure,
 Wealth or rank possessing,
 Ye who now will bless the poor
 Shall yourselves find blessing.

* * *

History

The Feast of Stephen is December 26, the day after Christmas.

The legend behind Good King Wenceslas is based on the life of the historical Saint Wenceslaus I, Duke of Bohemia (907–935). After his assassination by his brother, Boleslav, Wenceslas was posthumously declared to be a king and came to be seen as the patron saint of the Czech state.

The tune for the carol is that of a thirteenth-century Spring carol.

[TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM 76.76 D trochaic]

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

4/4 time; crotchet = 96–108

Verse One

| : G . . . | . . G/D D |

Hark! The herald angels sing,

G/B . C . | G/D D G . |

'Glory to the newborn King!

G . . . | . . A7 . |

Peace on Earth, and mercy mild,

D . . G | D/A A7 D . |

God and sinners reconciled!'

D . . . | |

Joyful all ye nations rise,

D . . . | |

Join the triumph of the skies,

C . . . | |

With the Angelic Host proclaim,

D . G . | C D G . |

'Christ is born in Bethlehem!'

Refrain

C . . . | . G/B C . |

Hark! The herald angels sing,

D . G . | C D G . :|

'Glory to the newborn King!'

Verse Two

Christ, by highest heaven adored,

Christ the everlasting Lord,

Late in time behold Him come,

Offspring of a Virgin's womb:

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,

Hail the incarnate Deity,
 Pleased as man with man to dwell,
 Jesus, our Emmanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing,
'Glory to the newborn King!'

Verse Three (Descant)

G . . D | G . G/D D |

Hail, the Heaven-born Prince of Peace!

G . C . | G/D D G . |

Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!

G . . D | G . A7 . |

Light and life to all He brings,

D . . . | G A D . |

Risen with healing in His wings;

D . . . | |

Mild He lays His glory by,

D | |

Born that man no more may die,

C . Dm . | A/E E Am . |

Born to raise us from the Earth,

D . G . | G/D D G . |

Born to give us second birth:

C . Bø4 . | A/E E Am . |

Hark! The herald angels sing,

D D7 G . | G/D D G . |

'Glory to the newborn King!'

* * *

History

'Hark! The Herald Angels Sing' first appeared in the collection *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), having being written by Charles Wesley, from a chorus by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy. It was adapted later into the carol we know today by William Cummings.

[MENDELSSOHN 77.77 D and refrain]

Joy to the World

2/4 time; crotchet = 88–96

Verse One

| :C . | . . | F G | C .

Let to the world! The Lord is come:

| F . | G . | C . | . .

Let Earth receive her King!

| C . | . . | . . | . .

Let every heart prepare Him room,

| C | G7

And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,

| C | F G C . :|

And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

Verse Two

Let to the Earth! The Saviour reigns:

Let men, their songs employ;

While fields and floods, rocks hills and plains,

Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,

Repeat, repeat the sounding joy!

Verse Three

He rules the world with truth and grace

And makes the nations prove

The glories of his righteousness

And wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,

And wonders, wonders of his love.

* * *

History

The lyrics to 'Joy to the World' are by English hymn writer Isaac Watts, and are based off the second half of Psalm 98 in the Bible. The lyrics speak less about Jesus' birth in Bethlehem and more about his second coming. The tune to this popular carol – called **Antioch** – is of unclear origin.

[ANTIOCH 86.86 extended]

Battle Hymn of the Republic

4/4 time; crotchet = 108

Verse One

I :.. | F |
Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
F | Bb | F
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
F | F | C/E Dm
He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword:
Dm | Gm . Csus C | F |
His truth is marching on.

Refrain

F | | Bb | F |
Glory, glory, hallelujah, glory, glory, hallelujah,
F | F . Dm . | Gm . Csus C | F . . . :|
Glory, glory, hallelujah, his truth is marching on.

Verse Two

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgement seat:
O be swift, my soul, to answer Him; be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.
Glory, glory ...

History

The melody for Battle Hymn of the Republic was adapted from the tune **John Brown's Body** and an American Camp Meeting Song, in 1861. The words to this carol were written by the writer Julia Ward Howe, and others.

[BATTLE HYMN irregular]

* * *

Verse Three

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom which transfigures you and me:
As he died to make men holy, let us live to make men free,
While God is marching on.
*Glory, glory, hallelujah, glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah, his truth is marching on.*

Verse Four

He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave;
He is wisdom to the mighty; he is succour to the brave:
So the world shall be his foot-stool and the soul of time his slave:
Our God is marching on.
F . . . | **Bb** | **F** |
Glory, glory, hallelujah, glory, glory, hallelujah,
F | **F** . **Dm** . . | **Gm** . . **Csus C** | **F7** |
Glory, glory, hallelujah, his truth is marching on.
Bb | **Eb** | **Bb** |
Glory, glory, hallelujah, glory, glory, hallelujah,
Bb | **D** . **Gm** . . | **Cm7** . . **Fsus F** | **Bb** |
Glory, glory, hallelujah, his truth is marching on.

O Come, All Ye Faithful

4/4 time; crotchet = 104–116

Verse One

| :G|G . . . |Am . D . |G . . . C |G/D·D . |

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!

A7· D A/C#|D . . . |D/A·A7·|D . . . |

Come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;

G . . . |C . G . |D . . Em A7|D . .

Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels:

Refrain

D|G|. . . .|. . . . C|G/D·D

O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him,

D|C . . . |D . Em· |G/D·D . |G . . . :|

O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Verse Two

True God of True God, Light of Light eternal,

Lo, He abhors not the Virgin's womb;

Son of the Father, begotten not created:

O come ...

Verse Three (Descant)

G|Am·D . |G . D· G C|G/D·D . |

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

Em . D A |D|D/A·A·|D . . . |

Sing, all ye citizens of Heaven above!

G· . . |C·B·|Em·A . |D|

Glory to God in the highest:

D|G|. . . .|. . . . C|G/D·D

O come let us adore Him, O come let us adore Him,

D|Am7 G/B C6 A|D . Em C|G/D·D . |G|

O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

Verse Four

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to thee be glory given!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
O come ...

* * *

History

Originally written in Latin as '*Adeste Fideles*', 'O Come All Ye Faithful' has been attributed to various authors, including John Francis Wade, with the earliest copies of the melody and lyrics all bearing his signature. The English translation was made in 1841 by the Catholic priest Frederick Oakeley. Verse Four is suitable for Christmas Day.

[ADESTE FIDELES irregular]

O Holy Night

6/8 time; dotted crotchet = 108–128

Verse One

|:C . | . . |F . |C .|. .
 O holy night, the stars are brightly shining:
 C |C . |G . |C . |..|
 It is the night of our dear Saviour's birth.
 C . | . . |F . |C .|C7
 Long lay the world in sin and error pining
 C7 |Em . |B7 . |Em .|..
 Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.
 |G7 . | . . |C . . | . .
 A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices,
 |G7 . | . . |C . . | . . |
 For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
 Am .|.. |Em .|.. |Dm .|. . |Am .|..
 Fall on your knees! O, hear the angel voices!
 |C .|G7 . |C .|F . |C . |G . |C .|.. :|
 O night divine, the night when Christ was born!

Verse Two

Led by the light of faith serenely beaming,
 With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand.
 O'er the world a star is sweetly gleaming,
 Now come the wise men from Orient Land ...
 The King of Kings laid thus in lowly manger,
 In all our trials born to be our friends.
 He knows our need, our weakness is no stranger,
 Behold your King! Before Him lowly bend!

Verse Three

Truly He taught us to love one another,
 His law is love and His gospel is peace.
 Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother,
 And in His name all oppression shall cease.
 Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we,
 With all our hearts we praise His holy name.
 Christ is the Lord! Then ever, ever praise we,
 His power and glory ever more proclaim!

* * *

History

In 1847 Frenchman Placide Cappeau asked composer Adolphe Adam to write a melody for Cappeau's recently-written poem. The result, 'O Holy Night', has become one of the best-known French Christmas carols.

[O HOLY NIGHT 11 10.11 10 D]

0 Little Town of Bethlehem

4/4 time; crotchet = 108–128

Verse One

|:C|C . . . |F . .
 O, little town of Bethlehem,
 F |C . G . |C . .
 How still we see thee lie!
 C|C . A . |Dm . . .
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,
 |C/G . G . |C . . .
 The silent stars go by.
 |C . . Am |E ...
 Yet in thy dark streets shineth
 |Am. Dm/F . |E . .
 The Everlasting Light;
 E7 |C . . . |F . . .
 The hopes and fears of all the years
 . |C/G . G6,7 . |C . . :|
 Are met in thee tonight.

Verse Two

For Christ is born of Mary,
 And gathered all above,
 While mortals sleep, the angels keep
 Their watch of wond'ring love.
 O morning stars, together,
 Proclaim the holy birth,
 And praises sing to God the King,
 And peace to men on Earth.

Verse Three

How silently, how silently
 The wondrous gift is giv'n!
 So God imparts to human hearts
 The blessings of His Heav'n.
 No ear may hear his coming,
 But in this world of sin,
 Where meek souls will receive him still
 The dear Christ enters in!

Verse Four

O holy Child of Bethlehem,
 Descend to us we pray;
 Cast out our sin and enter in,
 Be born in us today.
 We hear the Christmas Angels
 The great glad tidings tell;
 O come to us, abide with us,
 Our Lord Emmanuel!

* * *

Alternate Melody (Forest Green)

| : C7 | F . . . | . . .

O, little town of Bethlehem,

F | Bb . C . | F . .

How still we see thee lie!

C | F . . . | . . F7

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep,

F7 | Bb . C . | F . .

The silent stars go by.

F | F . . . | . . .

Yet in thy dark streets shineth

C | F . G7 . | C .

The Everlasting Light;

C . | F . . . | . . F7

The hopes and fears of all the years

F7 | Bb . C7 . | F . . :|

Are met in thee tonight.

* * *

History

Inspired by a visit to Bethlehem, Phillips Brooks wrote the text to 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' in 1865. He gave instruction to his church organist Lewis Redner to write the melody. The result was named **St. Louis**. Later, the Englishman Ralph Vaughan Williams adapted the folk song *The Ploughboy's Dream* into the tune **Forest Green**, an alternate melody which is more popular in the Commonwealth.

[ST. LOUIS/FOREST GREEN 86.86 D]

The Twelve Days of Christmas

mixed metre (see margins); crotchet = 135–144

4 | C | F . Dm .
 4 | On the first day of Christmas,
 | | Gm C7 F .
 | My true love sent to me:
 | | F Bb C C7 | F . .
 | A partridge in a pear tree.
 | C | F . Dm .
 | On the second day of Christmas,
 | | Gm C7 F . |
 | My true love sent to me:
 | C . .
 | Two turtle doves,
 | C | F Bb C C7 | F . .
 | And a partridge in a pear tree.
 | C | F . Dm .
 | On the third day of Christmas,
 | | Gm C7 F . |
 | My true love sent to me:
3 | C . . |
 4 | Three French hens,
4 | C . .
 4 | Two turtle doves,
 | C | F Bb C C7 | F . .
 | And a partridge in a pear tree.
 | C | F . Dm .
 | On the fourth day of Christmas,

| |Gm C7 F . |

| My true love sent to me:

3 | C . . |

4 | Four calling birds,

| C . . |

| Three French hens,

4 | C . .

4 | Two turtle doves,

| C |F Bb C C7 |F . .

| And a partridge in a pear tree.

... &c. ...

| C |F . Dm .

| On the twelfth day of Christmas,

| |Gm C7 F. |

| My true love sent to me:

3 | C . . |

4 | Twelve drummers drumming,

| C . . |

| Eleven pipers piping,

| C . . |

| Ten lords a-leaping,

| C . . |

| Nine ladies dancing,

| C . . |

| Eight maids a-milking,

| C . . |

| Seven swans a-swimming,

| C . . |

| Six geese a-laying,

4 | C . G7 . | C7 . . . |
 4 | Five golden rings,
3 | F . . . |
 4 | Four calling birds,
 | Bb . . |
 | Three French hens,
4 | C . C7
 4 | Two turtle doves,
 | C | F Bb C C7 | F . . ||
 | And a partridge in a pear tree.

* * *

History

The Twelve Days of Christmas is an English Carol (possibly French in origin) that enumerates in the manner of a cumulative song, a series of increasingly grand gifts. Some of the gifts have been given religious meaning over the years.

Once in Royal David's City

4/4 time; crotchet = 84–92

Verse One

|:G . Em . |C . D G |
 Once in royal David's city
 G . Em . |A7 D G . |
 Stood a lowly cattle shed,
 G . Em . |C . D G |
 Where a mother laid her Baby
 G . Em . |A7 D G . |
 In a manger for His bed:
 Em . Bm . |C D G D/F#|
 Mary was that mother mild,
 Em . Bm . |C D G.:|
 Jesus Christ, her little child.

Verse Two

He came down to Earth from Heaven
 Who is God and Lord of All
 And His shelter was a stable
 And His cradle was a stall.
 With the poor and meek and lowly
 Stood on Earth our Saviour Holy.

Verse Three

And through all his wondrous childhood,
 Day by day like us he grew;
 He was little, weak and helpless,
 Tears and smiles like us he knew;
 And he feels for all our sadness,
 And he shares in all our gladness.

Verse Four

And our eyes at last shall see Him
 Through His own redeeming love,
 For that Child so dear and gentle
 Is our Lord in Heaven above;
 And He leads His children on,
 To the place where He is gone.

Verse Five

Not in that poor lowly stable,
 With the oxen standing by,
 We shall see him: but in heaven,
 Set at God's right hand on high,
 When his children gather round
 Bright like stars, with glory crowned.

* * *

History

'Once in Royal David's City' was originally written as a poem by Cecil Alexander. Her poem, published in the 1848 hymnbook *Hymns for Children*, was set to music by the English organist Henry John Gauntlett.

Mrs Alexander is also remembered for her hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'.

[IRBY 87.87.77]

Silent Night

6/8 time; quaver = 86–104

Verse One

| :Bb | |
 Silent night, holy night:
 F7 | Bb |
 All is calm, all is bright
 Eb | Bb |
 Round yon virgin mother and child.
 Eb | Bb |
 Holy infant, so tender and mild,
 F7 | Gm . C7 . . |
 Sleep in heavenly peace,
 Bb . . F7 . . | Bb :|
 Sleep in heavenly peace!

Verse Two

Silent night, holy night:
 Shepherds quake at the sight,
 Glories stream from heaven afar,
 Heavenly hosts sing, 'Alleluia!'
 Christ the Saviour is born,
 Christ the Saviour is born!

Verse Three

Silent night, holy night:
 Son of God, love's pure light;
 Radiant beams from thy holy face,
 With the dawn of redeeming grace:
 Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
 Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

* * *

History

'Silent Night' was composed in 1818 by Franz Xaver Gruber to lyrics by Joseph Mohr in the small town of Oberndorf bei Salzburg, Austria. As such, it was first written in German, as '*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht*'. In 1859, the priest John Young published the English translation that is most frequently sung today, containing three of Mohr's original six verses.

[SILENT NIGHT irregular]

* * *

The First Noël

History

Noël (also *Noel* or *Nowell*) is a French word derived from the Latin, meaning 'Christmas'.

'The First Noël', in its current form, is of Cornish origin. It was first published in *Carols Ancient and Modern* (1823), as edited by William Sandys and arranged, edited and with extra lyrics written by Davies Gilbert.

This carol's melody is unusual among English folk melodies because it consists of one musical phrase repeated twice, followed by a variation on that phrase. All three phrases start and end on the third degree of the scale.

[THE FIRST NOËL irregular]

* * *

3/4 time; crotchet = 108–116

Verse One

A | :D . Bm|A·D6/F#|G . . |D .
 The first Noël, the angel did say,
 D | G . . |D . . |G . A7 | D .
 Was to certain poor shepherds in fields where they lay.
 A |D . Bm |A · D6/F# |G . . |D .
 In fields where they lay there, keeping their sheep,
 D |G . . |D . . |G · A |D .
 On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain

A|D· Bm|A·D/F#|G· ·|D · · |
 Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël;
 Bm · · |F#m· · |G·A|D · :|
Born is the King of Israel!

Verse Two

They looked up and saw a star,
 Shining in the East beyond them far:
 And to the Earth it gave great light,
 And so it continued, both day and night.
Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël; born is the King of Israel!

Verse Three

Then entered in those Wise Men three,
 Full reverently upon their knee,
 And offered there in his presence,
 Their Gold and Myrrh and Frankincense.
Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël; born is the King of Israel!

The Holly and the Ivy

3/4 time; crotchet = 135–144

Verse One

| : **Ab** | **Ab** . . | . .

The Holly and the Ivy,

Ab | **Db** . . | **Eb** .

When they are both full grown

Eb | **Ab** . . | **Db** .

Of all the trees that are in the wood,

Db | **Ab/Eb** . **Eb** | **Ab** .

The Holly bears the crown.

Refrain

Ab | **Ab** . . | . .

O, the rising of the sun

Ab | **Db** . . | **Eb**

And the running of the deer,

Eb | **Ab** . . | **Db** .

The playing of the organ

Db | **Ab/Eb** . . | **Ab** . : |

Sweet singing in the choir.

Verse Two

The Holly bears a blossom

As white as lily flower,

And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ

To be our sweet Saviour.

O, the rising of the sun ...

Verse Three

The Holly bears a berry
 As red as any blood,
 And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
 To do poor sinners good.
O, the rising of the sun ...

Verse Four

The Holly bears a prickle
 As sharp as any thorn,
 And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
 On Christmas Day in the morn.
O, the rising of the sun ...

Verse Five

The Holly bears a bark
 As bitter as any gall,
 And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
 For to redeem us all!
O, the rising of the sun ...

Verse Six

The Holly and the Ivy,
 When they are both full grown
 Of all the trees that are in the wood,
 The Holly bears the crown.
O, the rising of the sun ...

* * *

History

The imagery behind 'The Holly and the Ivy' relates to ancient fertility imagery behind the two trees: holly, representing the masculine and the good; ivy, the feminine and the evil.

The other imagery is from the Bible: the blood-red berry speaks to Jesus' crucifixion (Mt27:32–56; Mk15:21–41; Lk23:26–43; Jn19:16–37); the prickly, Jesus' crown of thorns (Mt27:29; Mk15:17; Jn19:2,5); and the bitter bark, the wine vinegar that was offered to Jesus as he died (Mt15:23; Mk27:34).

The tune – originally a folk song – was collected by the great Cecil Sharp, who heard it sung by Mary Clayton of Chipping Campden in 1909.

We Three Kings

3/8 time; quaver = 152–168

Verse One

| :Em . . | . . . | B . . | Em . . |
 We three kings of Orient are
 Em . . | . . . | B . . | Em . . |
 Bearing gifts we traverse afar;
 Em . . | D . . | G . . | . . . |
 Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
 Am . . | Em/B . B | Em . . |
 Following yonder star:

Refrain

D . . | G . . | . . . | C . . | G . . |
O, star of wonder, star of night,
 G . . | . . . | C . . | G . . |
Star with royal beauty bright,
 Em . . | D . . | C . . | D . . |
Westward leading, still proceeding,
 G . . | . . . | C . . | G . . : |
Guide us to thy perfect light.

Verse Two

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
 Gold I bring, to crown Him again –
 King forever, ceasing never,
 Over us all to reign.
O, star of wonder ...

Verse Three

Frankincense to offer have I;
 Incense owns a Deity nigh;
 Prayer and praising, voices raising,

Worshipping God most high.
O, star of wonder ...

Verse Four

Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
 Breathes a life of gathering gloom;
 Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
 Sealed in a stone-cold tomb.
O, star of wonder ...

Verse Five

Glorious now, behold him, arise:
 King, and God, and sacrifice!
 Alleluia! Alleluia!
 Rings through the earth and skies.
O, star of wonder ...

* * *

History

'We Three Kings' tells the story of the Magi, who are mentioned by Matthew only (2:1–12). The gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh are exceptionally good gifts for the infant Jesus: gold for the King of kings; incense for the High Priest of high priests; and myrrh ointment, used to heal. But myrrh is also used to embalm corpses – and Jesus was born to die on the cross.

This carol, composed in 1857 by John Hopkins Jr., was organised in such a way that three male voices would each sing a single verse by himself, corresponding with three gifts. The first and last verses are sung together as verses of praise.

[KINGS OF ORIENT 88.86 with refrain]

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

3/4 time; crotchet = 135–144

C | **F** . . | **Bb** .
We wish you a Merry Christmas,
Bb | **G7** . . | **C** .
We wish you a Merry Christmas,
C | **A7** . . | **Dm** .
We wish you a Merry Christmas,
Dm | **Gm** . **C** | **F** .
And a Happy New Year!

C | **F** . . | **C** .
Good tidings we bring,
. | **Bb** . . | **F** .
To you and your kin.
F | **Dm** . . | **Am** .
We wish you a Merry Christmas,
Am | **Gm** . **C** | **F** .
And a Happy New Year!

We wish you a Merry Christmas,
We wish you a Merry Christmas,
We wish you a Merry Christmas,
And a Happy New Year!

* * *

Alternate Verses

Now bring us some figgy pudding ...
 For we all like figgy pudding ...
 We won't go till we've got some ...
 So bring some out here. *Good tidings* ...

* * *

History

'We Wish You a Merry Christmas' is a popular English Christmas carol from the West Country of England. It exists in many different forms and variations. Its early history is unclear, first appearing as an elaborate four-part arrangement by Arthur Warrell published by Oxford University Press in 1935, fully formed.

The verses about figgy pudding are rarely, if ever, sung today, as they are seen as irrelevant or confusing. They have their origins in an English tradition wherein wealthy people would give Christmas treats to the carollers on Christmas Eve, such as puddings. (Figgy pudding can refer to a raisin or plum pudding, not necessarily one containing figs.)

In contrast to its use today, 'We Wish You a Merry Christmas' was probably something carollers sung at the end of a long rendition of other repertoire, hoping to get something for their musical efforts. 'We won't go till we've got some!'

While Shepherds Watched

4/4 time; crotchet = 98–116

Verse One

| : F | F . . . | Bb . F

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,

F | F . C/G C | C . C7

All seated on the ground,

C7 | Bb . . . | . . A

An angel of the Lord came down

A | Bb . C . | F . . : |

And glory shone around.

Verse Two

'Fear not,' said he (for mighty dread

Had seized their troubled mind),

'Glad tidings of great joy I bring

To you and all mankind!

Verse Three

'To you, in David's town, this day

Is born of David's line

A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,

And this shall be the sign:

Verse Four

'The heavenly Babe you there shall find

To human view displayed,

All meanly wrapped in swaddling bands

And in a manger laid.'

Verse Five

Thus spake the seraph, and forthwith

Appeared a shining throng

Of angels praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song:

Verse Six

'All glory be to God on high
And to the Earth be peace;
To those on whom His favour rests
Goodwill shall never cease!'

* * *

History

Describing the Annunciation to the shepherds, 'While Shepherds Watched' has words attributed to the Irish hymnodist/lyricist Nahum Tate. The tune is a later form of a melody from Thomas Este's *Psalter*.

'Shepherds' was the first Christmas carol in the Anglican Church, prior to which only the Psalms of David were sung. Paraphrasing the Bible in rhyme as carols – this carol is based off Luke 2:8–15 – then became very popular.

[WINCHESTER OLD 86.86 (CM)]

Metre in Hymn Music

Introduction

There are three measurements taken when determining the meter in hymn music: the poetic meter (in feet number and type), and the hymn meter (a measurement of the number of syllables in each line).

Poetic Metre

Poetic meter is determined by the number and type of feet in any one line of poetry. A foot is the basic repeated syllable building block for a line, often two or three syllables.

There are four main feet used in hymn music; the iamb, the trochee, the dactyl and the anapaest. (These terms are borrowed from Latin and Ancient Greek poetry.)

Stress & Foot	Example Poetry
Short, Long (Iambic)	Shall I <i>compare</i> thee to a <i>summer's day</i> ? Thou <i>art</i> more <i>lovely and more temperate</i> : Rough <i>winds</i> do shake the <i>darling buds</i> of May , And <i>summer's lease</i> hath all too short a <i>date</i> ... – Shakespeare, <i>Sonnet 18</i>
Long , Short (Trochaic)	<i>Lives</i> of great men all <i>remind</i> us <i>We</i> can make our <i>lives</i> sublime <i>And, departing, leave behind</i> us <i>Footsteps on</i> the sands of time . – Longfellow, <i>A Psalm of Life</i>
Long , Short, Short (Dactylic)	Just for a <i>handful</i> of silver he left us, Just for a <i>riband</i> to stick in his <i>coat</i> . Found the one <i>gift</i> of which <i>fortune bereft</i> us, Lost all the <i>others</i> she lets us <i>devote</i> ; – Browning, <i>The Lost Leader</i>
Short, Short, Long (Anapaestic)	The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold And his <i>cohorts</i> were gleaming in purple and gold And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee. – Byron, <i>The Destruction of Sennacherib</i>

In addition to the above feet, however, feet substitution can take place. If an iamb or a trochee foot is replaced by two unstressed syllables, this is called a Pyrrus foot. If it is replaced by two stressed syllables, it is called a Spondee foot.

The other descriptor of poetic meter is the number of feet in a line:

Number of Feet	Prefix	Name
3	Tri-	Trimeter
4	Tetra-	Tetrameter
5	Pent-	Pentameter
6	Hex-	Hexameter
7	Hept-	Heptameter
8	Oct-	Octameter

These two descriptors are placed together, as in 'iambic pentameter', which William Shakespeare used often, or 'dactylic trimeter', favoured by Tennyson. As an example,

*Come now, everlasting spirit,
Bring to every thankful mind
All the Saviour's dying merit,
Suff'rings all for humankind ...*

This is trochaic tetrameter, with one missing syllable at the end of every second line.

Hymn Metre

Hymn meter indicates the number of syllables in the lines of each stanza of a hymn. As an example, take the first lines of the hymn 'Amazing Grace':

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.*

A poet, as we have seen, would quickly see four lines of iambic feet, with four in the first and third line, and three in the second and fourth. However, a musician would see eight syllables in the first and third line and six in the second and fourth.

To describe this, too, in the hymn's meter, a hymnodist describes 8, then 6, then 8, then 6 syllables; denoted '86.86'. Conventionally, most hymns in this 86.86 pattern are iambic, whereas most 87.87 hymns are trochaic. 'At the Name of Jesus', for instance, is in 65.65 meter:

*At the Name of Jesus, every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess him King of Glory now,
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call him Lord,
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.*

There are shorthand methods of naming some more common syllable patterns, set out below.

CM – common meter, or 86.86; a quatrain with alternating lines of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter. The rhyme falls on the second and fourth lines, and sometimes the first and third as well. Both *Amazing Grace* and *Winchester Old* are in common meter.

LM – long meter, or 88.88; a quatrain in iambic tetrameter. The rhyme falls on the second and fourth lines, and often the first and third. *Galilee* and *Winchester New* are in long meter.

SM – short meter, or 66.86; iambic lines in the first, second and fourth are in trimeter, and the third in Tetrameter, which rhymes in the second and fourth lines and sometimes in the first and third. *Blest Be the Tie that Binds* and *St. Thomas* are examples of hymns in short meter.

CMD or DCM – doubled common meter, i.e., 86.86 D. 'D' implies 'doubled'; therefore 87.87 D is equivalent to two verses of either trochaic or iambic 87.87. *Ode to Joy* is in 87.87 D.

For the record, the longest syllable pattern in the *Australian Hymn Book II: Together in Song* is the hymn 'There's a Light Upon the Mountains', in 15 15.15 15.

*There's a light upon the mountains, and the day is at the spring
When our eyes shall see the beauty and the glory of the King;
Weary was our heart with waiting, and the night-watch seemed so long,
But his triumph day is breaking, and we hail it with a song!*

The syllable meter, in combination with the poetic labelling, can match hymns together with like qualities. If the poetic and hymnic meters are identical, they can be sung to each other's melody. A hymn's meter can also be used for categorisation.

Compiler’s Note

Introduction

I hope you have enjoyed *For to Us a Child is Born*.

God gave humankind the gift of music so that we could praise him. Truly, there is no one more worth of our praise than God, who sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but to save all who believe in His resurrection through Him (John 3:17).

Chords

In chord music, chords are written in different ways:

Example	Symbol Explanation	Meaning
C; F#; Bb	# means ‘sharp’ (a semitone higher). b means ‘flat’ (a semitone lower).	C major chord; F sharp major chord; B flat major chord.
Am; D#m	m means ‘minor’.	A minor; D# minor.
G/D; Am/C; Fm/Bb;	/ means ‘with a bass of’. This can mean an inversion, or the bass note can be outside the chord (as in E/G).	G major with D bass; Am on a bass of C; Fm on Bb.
G7; Ab7; Bb7	7 means ‘dominant seventh’, or with an added minor seventh to the major chord.	G major, minor 7th; Ab major, minor 7th; Bb major, minor 7th.
Dsus; F#msus; C#sus2; (D4; F#m4; C2)	sus means ‘suspended’. Without modifier, it implies suspended 4th (replacing the 3rd with a 4th), but can also mean suspended 2nd (replacing the 3rd with 2nd) or others.	D major chord with a suspended fourth; F# minor chord with a suspended fourth; C# major chord with a suspended second.

Others will already understand diminished (e.g., A° or Bb°) and half-diminished (e.g., B7–5 or Bø) chords and other notation, but they are very rare in these simple arrangements.

Not all chords will accommodate the melody perfectly, and occasionally added 6ths, 7ths, 4ths, etc., will be necessary.

Descants

Every effort was made to accommodate the use of descants, over or instead of the melody, in the chord sequences in this book. However, such a wide variety of harmonisations for all of these carols exist that complete unanimity was impossible. If certain descants are required or desired, please contact the compiler.

Alternate Melodies

Many of these hymns can be sung to more than one tune. If this is the case, a replication of the first verse with alternate chord progressions has been written under the sub-heading 'alternate melody'.

Which melody is deemed 'alternate' and which is given preference in the full chordal transcript is somewhat trivial, but generally, it was dictated by a melody's popularity and prevalence in Australia, and which tune is used more frequently there.

It has been a joy compiling these carols in various formats over the years, and I hope you, the reader, will be able to derive joy from performing them, to the glory of God.

*T. P. Langsford
Sydney, Australia
January 2017*

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